

# Hot rocks

Be jewelled with the earth-inspired wonders of Kirsten Muenster's new jewellery line. **SUMMER RAYNE OAKES** shows that these precious, little pieces have a big story to tell

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MODELLED BY THE AUTHOR

IT'S SOMETHING WE GIRLS NEVER SEEM TO OUTGROW: the pursuit of the perfect gem. When we were younger, we never hesitated to get our dress bottoms dirty just so we could peer into the bottom of riverbeds or beach surf for unfound treasures. When we grew older (save for the occasional vacation), those clear streams became the clear glass of storefront windows. The treasures are as precious to us now as they were back then, but the ones in *our* glass bowl back home just seemed to be missing something ...

Luckily for us there is Kirsten Muenster. The 33-year old jewellery designer has a great eye for finding the perfect little gem. Whether in a necklace, bracelet, or ring, Muenster's skillful use of metal and stone brings back the little girl on the surf's edge. Unlike our random rocks on our bedroom dressers that seem to be getting a little lacklustre, Muenster is able to maintain and even enhance the natural integrity of her materials. This is arguably an art form, a skill that the designer has captured and perfected since she was a young girl.

Muenster firmly attests, 'Metal is in my blood.' It's an authentic statement coming from the California-based designer. If you poke around her family roots like a rock hound kicking up agate stones along a riverbed, you'll turn up with some interesting, reaffirming tidbits. Her great-grandfather owned a metalsmithing shop in Austria. His son, her grandfather, was a metal sheet worker and her other grandfather was a coppersmith. Her mother, an antiques dealer, had also been a strong influence in her life. Young Muenster began collecting vintage jewellery at a very early age. 'I have always been fascinated by the idea that throughout history, people have felt compelled to adorn their bodies with metal, stones, fibre, and found objects,' remarks Muenster.

It is the same bedazzling awe-power that Muenster harnesses to convey the deeper story beneath each piece. The materials she uses reflect her politics. Lax policies for worker's rights and environmental stability helped put her own work into perspective. 'I've come to acknowledge the fact that the choices I make in my own work have an impact,' and undoubtedly Kirsten's wearable art pieces are a reflection of that.

Each piece is emblazoned with ethics. She strays away from using any questionable gem stones such as diamond and tanzanite, even with the advent of the Kimberly Process, a voluntary certification scheme that was approved by the international

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Lucire is the United Nations  
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BEHIND THE LABEL

## The ultimate one-night stand

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in particular; everyone has their own style, it's just about recognizing it.

'For me style is confidence. I always encourage a client to go for the dress they stand up straight in, you can tell straight away if they feel comfortable and confident.'

Jayna was conservative when she was younger but is now more confident about what styles and colours she wears and hopes Estella's Wardrobe will help other people experiment and be adventurous too. Amanda says when it comes to style a lot of people simply don't realise what they can wear. 'Some people have a deluded perception of their body parts, especially the arms, the boobs, the hips and the back. We try to change this by getting them to try something we know will suit them.' Amanda's own wardrobe inspired the store concept.

If you are thinking of having a one-night stand, contact the girls on 64 4 801-6445 or visit [www.estellaswardrobe.co.nz](http://www.estellaswardrobe.co.nz).

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diamond industry and NGOs in 2002 to help put a stop in the

trade of conflict diamonds. Where she gets her materials are about as varied as her designs. Most of the stones she uses are found in the United States and acquired from stone dealers that she has built a trusting relationship with. She also does her own stone cutting from rocks that had been found as early as the 1940s. Occasionally she'll recycle stones from vintage pieces and when she uses fossils, she is sure to get them from privately-owned land. Gold, which she doesn't use very often, is always recycled.

Muenster is also exploring untraditional avenues in pursuit of socially conscious materi-

want to do some of own designs, probably jewellery and our own line of dresses, tops and whatever we get inspired by. 'It's about moving our lives forward, going shopping, going to fashion shows, bringing that back and dressing people.'

If the team from Estella's Wardrobe were to embark on a one night stand themselves Amanda would choose a dress from the wardrobe by Pablo Nevada or IPG and Jayna would choose one by Jayson Brunnsden or Nicole Miller. Both Jayna and Amanda site socialising as a favourite way to spend spare time, so the dresses are certain to be loaned from the wardrobe soon. Before I left Estella's wardrobe Amanda and Jayna let me have a play in the wardrobe.

I'd been sceptical about the idea of hiring dresses, but Estella's wardrobe does it with class and finally makes designer dresses available in a city where they are usually hard to find. •

als. She is currently designing pieces with the byproducts of manufacturing processes. One such example is her use of reclaimed Fordite. It is not so much a peculiar "stone" name until you dig deeper into the story behind the material, which is also known as 'Detroit Agate' found in the most unlikely of "quarries"—the Ford Motor Company. The exquisitely beautiful material looks like out-worldly agate stones and are the end results of the automotive assembly paint plant process.

In addition to her use of Fordite in her most current collection, Muenster is also taking to copper fire brick, the byproduct of the copper smelting process. 'It's smooth and glimmering. Each piece has the weight of metal and a patina like antique copper,' comments Muenster on the material. 'Most of the smelters are no longer in operation so each piece contains a little bit of the history of the upper mid-west.'

### History

It's part of what is special about her 'wearable abstract landscapes.' Like a modern-day Michelangelo, Muenster carves her mini-masterpieces with the same keen attention to detail, but with a preoccupation of something much deeper. 'I'm drawn in by the colour, pattern, shape and story behind the materials. But the choices I make regarding my jewellery,' explains Muenster, 'can be best understood in terms of my attempt to achieve more eco-conscious selections.'

From the beachfront to the storefront, Kirsten Muenster jewellery no doubt elicits the same feelings of excitement when finding the perfect stone, but the true testament of her work is the socially-conscious message buried deep behind the history of each piece. •

Visit [www.kirstenmuenster.com](http://www.kirstenmuenster.com).

## On the fringe

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their winter theme, the Heart of Darkness. Redhead introduced some striking pieces and Robyn Matheson never fails to impress.

## Zambesi at SPQR

The Zambesi fashion show at SPQR and Chandelier was a standout event. SPQR and Chandelier were bustling with patrons spilling

out from the bars on to the Ponsonby Road footpath. Zambesi's collection followed the brands distinctive identity and pieces were outstanding in design and wearability. •